

REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated March 4, 2008. Claims 1, 2, 4 to 6, 10 and 15 to 17 remain in the application, with Claims 3, 7 to 9 and 11 to 14 having been canceled and new Claims 16 and 17 having been added. Claims 1, 10 and 15 to 17 are the independent claims. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

The title of the invention was objected to as being non-descriptive. A new title has been provided for as recited above. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection to the title are respectfully requested.

Claims 13 to 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 101. Without conceding the correctness of the rejections, Claims 13 and 14 have been cancelled, while Claim 15 has been rewritten into independent form and to be in full compliance with § 101. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the § 101 rejections are respectfully requested.

Claims 6, 9 and 12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. In view of the cancellation of these claims, the § 112 rejections thereof are believed to be obviated. Thus, reconsideration and withdrawal of the § 112 rejections are respectfully requested.

Claims 1 to 4, 6, 10 and 13 to 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 6,181,956 (Koskan) in view of Japan 10-117263 (Hagimoto), Claim 5 was rejected under § 103(a) over Koskan in view of Hagimoto and further in view of JP 2001-236205 (Toshiyuki), Claims 7, 8 and 11 were rejected under § 103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 6,259,990 (Shojima) in view of Koskan, and Claims 9 and 12 were rejected

under § 103(a) over Koskan in view of Shojima. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested.

The present invention concerns a device that converts input text information into speech and outputs the speech if an external device is determined as being one that is located in a private space. An information service apparatus of the invention has a display means for displaying text information, text-to-speech synthesis means for executing a text-to-speech synthesis process on the basis of the text information to generate synthetic speech, and audio output means that can output the synthetic speech. A list of IDs of external devices that are each located in a private space is stored in a storage means, and when communication between the information service apparatus and the external device is in progress, an ID of the external device is acquired. Then, a determination is made whether or not the acquired ID of the external device is stored in the list of the storage means. If so, then external device is determined as one that is located in the private space, and the text-to-speech synthesis means is controlled to generate the synthetic speech and then output the generated synthetic speech to the audio output means. If not, then the external device is determined as one that is not located in a private space (i.e., is located in a public space instead) and the display means is controlled to display the text information. Thus, when a user is operating the device in a private space, and an incoming text message is received (e.g., email), the text message is converted into speech and audibly output for the user to hear, but if the user is not operating the device in a private space, then the incoming text message is output to the user in displayed form instead.

Referring specifically to the claims, Claim 1 is directed to an information service apparatus which comprises display means for displaying text information, text-to-

speech synthesis means for executing a text-to-speech synthesis process on the basis of the text information to generate synthetic speech, and audio output means that can output the synthetic speech, comprising storage means that stores a list of IDs of external devices that are each located in a private space, acquisition means that acquires, from an external device in which communication between the information service apparatus and the external device is in progress, the ID of the external device, determination means that determines whether or not the acquired ID of the external device is stored in the list of the storage means, and control means that controls said text-to-speech synthesis means to generate the synthetic speech and then output the generated synthetic speech to the audio output means if said determination means determines that the acquired ID of the external device is stored in the list, or controls said display means to display the text information if said determination means determines that the acquired ID of the external device is not stored in the list.

Claims 10 and 15 are method and computer medium claims that substantially correspond to Claim 1. Claim 16 is an apparatus claim that includes the features of Claim 1, but includes additional features as well, while Claim 17 is a method claim that corresponds to Claim 16.

The applied art, alone or in any permissible combination, is not seen to teach the features of the invention, and in particular, is not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the features of an information service apparatus i) storing a list of IDs of external devices that are each located in a private space, ii) acquiring, from an external device in which communication between the information service apparatus and the external device is in progress, the ID of the external device, iii) determining whether or not the acquired ID

of the external device is stored in the list, and iv) controlling a text-to-speech synthesis means to generate synthetic speech from received text information and then outputting the generated synthetic speech to an audio output means if it is determined that the acquired ID of the external device is stored in the list, or controlling a display means to display the text information if it is determined that the acquired ID of the external device is not stored in the list.

Koskan is seen to disclose a communication device worn by a user that receives text based messages and presents them in either a human readable form via a display, if the device is set in a first operating mode, or converts the text based messages into speech and outputs them in audible form, if the device is set in a second operating mode. Thus, whether a text message is converted into speech depends on the set operating mode. However, nothing has been found in Koskan in which a list of external devices located in a private space is maintained. Additionally, Koskan does not determine, when the text message is received, whether or not an ID acquired from the device sending the text message is included in the list of privately located devices in order to determine whether or not to convert the text into speech. Rather, Koskan merely converts all received text messages to speech if the user has set the device to the second operating mode, and presents all incoming text messages in readable form if the user has set the device to the first operating mode. Therefore, Koskan is not seen to teach the features of the claimed invention.

Hagimoto is merely seen to teach that a user of a copy machine can utilize a voice guidance system via a handset provided to the user in advance. When the voice guidance mode is selected by the operator in the off-hook state, the voice is transmitted

from a speaker to the handset. However, Hagimoto, like Koskan, is not seen to teach the features of storing a list of IDs of external devices that are each located in a private space, ii) acquiring, from an external device in which communication between the information service apparatus and the external device is in progress, the ID of the external device, iii) determining whether or not the acquired ID of the external device is stored in the list, and iv) controlling a text-to-speech synthesis means to generate synthetic speech from received text information and then outputting the generated synthetic speech to an audio output means if it is determined that the acquired ID of the external device is stored in the list, or controlling a display means to display the text information if it is determined that the acquired ID of the external device is not stored in the list.

Toshiyuki and Shojima have been studied but are not seen to add anything that, when combined with Koskan and/or Hagimoto, would have resulted in the invention. In this regard, Toshiyuki is merely seen to disclose a technique for outputting music and an incoming email as speech together with one another. Shojima is merely seen to disclose a pedestrian guidance system. However, neither Toshiyuki or Shojima are seen to disclose anything that, when combined with Koskan and/or Hagimoto, would have resulted in the features of storing a list of IDs of external devices that are each located in a private space, ii) acquiring, from an external device in which communication between the information service apparatus and the external device is in progress, the ID of the external device, iii) determining whether or not the acquired ID of the external device is stored in the list, and iv) controlling a text-to-speech synthesis means to generate synthetic speech from received text information and then outputting the generated synthetic speech to an audio output means if it is determined that the acquired ID of the external device is stored in the list, or

controlling a display means to display the text information if it is determined that the acquired ID of the external device is not stored in the list.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, amended independent Claims 1, 10 and 15 to 17, as well as the claims dependent therefrom, are believed to be allowable.

As a formal matter, Applicant thanks the Examiner for providing a Form PTO-1449 for the Information Disclosure Statement dated January 11, 2006. However, it is noted that two U.S. patent references listed on that Form PTO-1449 were not initialed by the Examiner to indicate that they have been considered. Therefore, Applicant requests that the Examiner return a completed form that includes initials for these two documents.

No other matters having been raised, the entire application is believed to be in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested at the Examiner's earliest convenience.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa, California office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,
/Edward Kmett/

Edward A. Kmett
Attorney for Applicant
Registration No.: 42,746

FITZPATRICK, CELLA, HARPER & SCINTO
30 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, New York 10112-3800
Facsimile: (212) 218-2200

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